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excessive competition. The distinction of first doing this seems to belong to the city of Brussels. In 1855 it appeared that wages there had scarcely varied since 1804, in spite of the rise of prices following the gold discoveries. The authorities of the city, therefore (at the advice of the building contractors), inserted in all building contracts a clause fixing a minimum rate of wages. In other countries it has more recently become a frequent rule of such contracts that wages must be as high as those prevailing in the given place and trade. Efforts to secure legislation fixing wages according to some ideal standard not necessarily corresponding to the prevailing rate have succeeded only in certain of the English colonies and in America. The demand that work be done directly by the public authority, without the intervention of contractors, has also been complied with in certain cases, while in France and Italy, but more generally in New Zealand, contracts have been let directly to co-operative associations of workmen.

The Austrian Bureau of Labor Statistics has undertaken, for the guidance of its own government, an inquiry regarding this sort of protection to laborers in various countries. The volume, as here offered, contains much useful information, though it shows the defects usual in such compilations. Thus it would be of interest to know how far the legislation which it describes (in the United States, for instance) is enforced, and how far it serves only the purpose of satisfying importunate voters.

A. P. WINSTON.

La protection ouvrière au Japon, projet de loi et enquête personnelle. Par KASHIRO SAÏTO, Commissaire-adjoint du Japon a l'exposition universelle de 1900, Chargé du service du Ministère de l'Agriculture et du Commerce. Paris: Larose et Forcel, 1900. Svo, pp. 189.

THIS little book will be of interest especially to students of labor conditions and of economic legislation. The modest purpose of the author, which was well carried out under some difficulties while he was acting as commissioner at the Paris Exposition, was to explain and comment upon the law for the protection of labor in Japan, which went into effect July 1, in the thirty-second year of Meiji (this appears to be 1899). In 1897 he made a personal inquiry into labor conditions,

visiting every province of the country as a member of a commission appointed for that purpose; and he then assisted in drafting a bill which, because of parliamentary changes, did not come to a vote. In the light of this preparation, he takes up one by one the articles of the present law, and explains simply the various courses open and the practical reasons in the situation for and against each of them. Incidentally he thus gives interesting glimpses of the industrial and social conditions of the country. Matters falling outside the strict letter of the law, but affecting labor, are also explained, such as the prevailing form of contract between employers and workmen, the shop rules of representative factories, beneficial institutions, etc. A number of statistical tables are included. The author shows a most friendly interest in the welfare of the workers, and is a strong believer in this form of legislation. He looks upon this book merely as a preparatory work, and promises to complete it when he returns to Japan. Students of labor conditions and of his interesting country will doubtless be glad to see that promise fulfilled.

F. A. F.

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The Early History of English Poor Relief. By E. M. LEONARD. Cambridge (at the University Press) and New York: The Macmillan Company, 1900. 8vo, pp. xviii + 397.

A History of the English Poor Law, Vol. III (from 1834 to the Present Time). Being a supplementary volume to *A History of the English Poor Law*, by SIR GEORGE NICHOLLS, K.C.B., Poor Law Commissioner and Secretary of the Poor Law Board. By THOMAS MACKAY. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1899. 8vo, pp. xv + 617.

THE appearance of these two books dealing with the English poor law within less than two years of the republication of Sir George Nicholls's monumental history, is notable. It is a substantial proof of widespread interest in this important social problem, for it records the faith of the cold publisher in the marketableness of volumes on a subject that has been deemed doleful and prosaic. Indeed, the books will be welcomed by many students of social problems.

The periods dealt with by the two books are widely sundered, the one volume dealing with the beginnings of poor law history, and the